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ABSTRACT

During a typical week of spring quarter, 1975, interviews were conducted with 3,802 people as they left facilities at the University of Washington library system. The randomly selected respondents included students, staff members, and faculty of the university, as well as nonuniversity members. In particular, the study investigated the use of library resources for research purposes, and the sources of off-campus funding for such research use. Among the respondents who reported support for research use, clear patterns of use of certain facilities and services appeared. The majority of the users, however, proved to be students primarily engaged in studying on library premises for class-related activities. (Author/EMH)

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Office of Institutional Educational Research

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August 18, 1975

Library Population: Survey of Use Characteristics of Visitors to UW Libraries

Judith Fiedler, Assistant Director

SUMMARY

During a typical week of Spring Quarter, 1975, interviews were conducted with 3,802 persons as they left facilities in the UW library system. The randomly selected respondents included students, staff members, and faculty of the University, as well as non-University members. In particular, the study investigated the utilization of library resources for research purposes, and the sources of off-campus funding for such research use. Among the respondents who reported support for research, clear patterns of use of certain facilities and services appeared. The majority of users, however, proved to be students, primarily engaged in studying on library premises for class-related activities.

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Introduction

As part of the University's effort in determining the extent and intensity of use of University facilities for research purposes, a survey was conducted during Spring Quarter, 1975 to "identify the total user population of the library facilities". Previous studies of this question have been conducted by the University Library Administration on this campus, as well as at other institutions. For the most part, however, the studies measured population characteristics indirectly, through the reports of library staff members, or library records, or relied on the voluntary participation of users who received questionnaires by mail, or were given such forms in the facilities. While much valuable information has been obtained by these means, the studies have lacked the representative character which is associated with random sample surveys. The study reported here was designed to take advantage of scientific survey research techniques, to obtain generalizable data on library utilization. Although library staff members did not participate in the survey, their cooperation in its planning and conduct was essential, and is gratefully acknowledged.

Between May 6 and 13 a sample of 3,802 individuals were interviewed as they left UW libraries. The respondents, chosen at random, included students, faculty and staff members, and others who had been in the libraries, for whatever purpose. The brief interview schedule (Appendix A) asked about the purpose of the visit, the library facilities or materials used, frequency of use, and the status of the respondent. Where "research" was cited as the purpose. information was obtained on whether the research was funded by an off-campus agency, and if so, the sponsoring agency's name. All responses were coded and tabulated.

This report presents the results of the survey. In the tables which

follow, data are shown separately for four classes of respondents: those who reported no research funding, funding under HEW programs, funding under other federal programs, and funding by non-federal governmental or private agencies. Unless otherwise noted, the figures in the tables give percentages of response to each question.

Results

The interviews were conducted at 21 sites*, with numbers of respondents proportional to the numbers using each facility, during all hours of operation. The interview locations and numbers are shown on Table 1.

Table 1

Location and Numbers of Interviews

Library	Total	Non-Funded	HEW-Funded	Other Federal Funding	Non-Federal Funded
Undergraduate Library	850	847	1	1	1
Suzzallo	675	653	1	0	21
Health Sciences	308	275	19	5	9
Business Administration	361	357	0	0	4
Engineering#	198	184	2	5	7
Harborview #	16	12	2	1	1
Chemistry-Pharmacy	148	136	1	3	8
Art	106	105	0	0	1
Drama	74	73	0	0	1
Far Eastern	46	46	0	0	0
Forestry	70	67	0	-	2
Music	110	110	0	0	0
Physics	98	84	1	7	6
Geography	73	73	0	0	0
Social Work	111	111	0	0	0
Music Listening	100	100	0	0	0
Political Science	79	77	0	0	2
Mathematics	78	76	1	0	1
Fisheries/Oceanography	126	113	1	7	5
Philosophy	52	51	0	0	1
Arch./Urban Planning	99	96	1	1	1
	3778	3647	30	30	71
Missing observations	24				

*Interviewers stationed themselves at the exit doors of each library, and selected respondents as they left the facility. At Suzzallo, interviews were distributed proportionately over the three exits of the building.

#Interviewing at Harborview was conducted during only eight hours of the study period, due to the limited hours of operation and low population of the library.

A wide range of activities were indicated in the answers to the first question, "Which facilities or services have you used on this visit to the library?". The interviewers were instructed to refer to the specific visit just concluded, and the respondents were free to name any service and facility. Under these circumstances, both activities related to the academic function of the library, and those which made use simply of building facilities, such as space for studying, restrooms, or equipment, could be cited. Indeed, the most frequently mentioned activity, as shown in Table 2, was "studying", which could be considered as simply a fortuitous use of library facilities.

Table 2

Facilities or Services Used

Use	Total	% Non-funded	% HEW Funded	% Other Federal-Funded	% Non-Federal-Funded
Studying	1326	36	7	13	11
Checking out materials	346	9	17	25	15
Periodicals, newspapers	309	8	10	16	18
Reference materials	287	7	25	16	10
Used reserve materials	230	6	7	0	1
Searching for material	196	5	7	13	10
Reading	182	5	7	6	3
Card catalogue	159	4	10	5	6
Media Center	106	3	0	0	1
Returned materials	105	3	0	3	3
Listening to recordings	61	2	0	0	0
Research for class paper	31	1	0	0	3
Social/meeting friends	125	3	0	0	1
Xerox/copy	92	2	10	3	10
Restrooms	45	1	0	0	0
Telephone	11	0	0	0	3
Group study room	25	1	0	0	0
Use calculator	9	0	0	0	1
Sleep	6	0	0	0	0
Employed	29	1	0	0	0
Other	116	3	0	0	4
		100	100	100	100

Where a second use of the library was mentioned, it tended also to be studying (4%), checking out materials (4%), or the use of reference materials or periodicals (3%). However, 78% of non-funded, 65% of non-federally funded, and 72% of all federally-funded respondents named no second activity.

Selection of the library as a place to study, nevertheless, was not a random choice, particularly for those engaged in funded research. Eighty-nine percent of these respondents used materials from the library for their study, in whole or in part, compared to 59% of non-funded students. Table 3 gives these figures.

Table 3

Source of Materials Used for Studying or Reading

	% of Non-funded	% HEW Funded	% Other Federal-Funded	% Non-Federal-Funded
Library	47	80	87	72
User's Own	41	10	0	15
Both library and user's	12	10	13	13

The end product of the work done in the library was most often preparation for classwork among all users, as Table 4 shows.

Table 4

Purpose for Which Libraries are Used

	% of Non-funded	% HEW Funded	% Other Federal-Funded	% Non-Federal-Funded
Classwork reading	58	7	6	3
Research for class	22	73	82	64
Studying for a test	5	0	0	0
Research, not classwork connected	1	17	9	24
Assigned class reading	1	0	0	0
Recreational, personal	4	3	3	1
Other	9	0	0	8

Well over 90% of the respondents mentioned only one purpose for their library visit. Where a second was named, it tended to be studying or checking out materials.

For the most part, library users made few demands on staff members during the visits sampled, and these demands were minimal. As Table 5 indicates, the respondents most often required no assistance, or asked for merely routine services, such as circulation desk procedures or instruction on locating materials.

Table 5

Assistance Provided by Library Staff Members

	% of Non-funded	% HEW Funded	% Other Federal-Funded	% Non-Federal-Funded
None	63	69	32	52
Checked out materials	13	10	32	15
Assisted in locating materials	9	7	19	25
Checked out reserve material	5	0	6	0
Obtained materials	3	0	3	0
Located, set up, explained equipment	2	3	0	0
Answered general reference questions	2	0	0	0
Provided information on library operation	1	0	0	3
Gave directions, general information		7	6	1
Other	1	4	2	4

Whatever the purpose cited, the library facilities to effectuate it must have been satisfactory. The large majority of respondents in all four categories reported attending the library for that purpose at least once a week, with substantial minorities noting five or more times. Interestingly, as Table 6 shows, respondents engaged in research funded by non-federal sources were most likely to report infrequent library use. Researchers under HEW grants or contracts were somewhat more often in the libraries than other respondents.

Table 6

Frequency of Use for Stated Purpose

	% of Non-Funded	% HEW Funded	% Other Federal-Funded	% Non-Federal-Funded
5 or more times/week	34	38	29	20
3 - 4 times/week	22	21	31	20
1 - 2 times/week	25	28	25	31
2 - 3 times/month	6	10	6	6
1 time/month	4	0	9	8
1 - 2 times/quarter	4	3	0	6
1 - 2 times/year	2	0	0	3
Less than one time/year	3	0	0	6

As might be anticipated, the largest number of respondents engaged in funded research are graduate students at the University. Substantial numbers of library users are faculty members, who report research funding, while relatively few identify themselves as staff members. The category of researchers under other than federal funding which appears in Table 7, includes researchers for industry, state or local agencies, private or quasi-public research organizations, and other local educational institutions.

Table 7

Status of Respondents

	Total	% of Non-funded	% HEW Funded	% Other Federal-Funded	% Non-Federal-Funded
UW undergraduate students	2469	67	7	0	19
UW graduate students	923	24	49	63	40
UW staff	69	2	3	3	6
UW faculty	109	2	34	22	8
Non-UW undergraduates	40	1	0	3	0
Non-UW graduate students	15	1	0	0	1
Other	149	3	7	9	26

The credit hours carried by student respondents are within the range for the student population as a whole.

Of the 69 staff members who were interviewed, the largest group, 18, listed themselves as office or clerical personnel, without research funding.

Two were medical technicians, and another 2 were laboratory technicians, working under HEW funding. Other staff members tended to use the libraries for non-research purposes.

One-hundred and sixty-one students reported receiving traineeship stipends or grants. Of these, 50 were under HEW programs, 40 under other federal funding, and the remaining 71 from state or other sources.

In all, 8 HEW and 14 other federal agencies were named as sources of funds. The federal agencies cited, and the numbers of researchers they affect, are shown in Table 8.

Table 3

Numbers of Respondents Reporting Federal Funding

	Number of Respondents	
	Research Grant or Contract	Traineeship or Stipend
Agency - HEW		
Child Development & Mental Retardation Center	3	2
Department of Public Health	1	9
Government Nursing Grant	0	0
HEW	3	12
National Cancer Institute	3	0
National Heart and Lung Institute	2	1
National Institute of Health	18	11
National Institute of Mental Health	4	15
	32	50
Agency - Other federal		
A federal agency	2	19
Atomic Energy Commission	2	2
Air Force	0	0
Army	0	0
Bureau of Land Management	1	1
Department of State	2	0
Environmental Protection Agency	3	5
National Business Administration	1	0
National Marine Fisheries Service	2	1
National Oceanography and Atmospheric Sciences	0	0
National Science Foundation	15	7
Navy	2	2
U.S. Forest Service	1	0
Veterans' Administration	3	3
	34	40

Discussion

At face value, this report suggests that only a very small proportion of the UW libraries' use is related to research, and of that portion, still less supports investigations funded by federal and HEW sources. Based on these findings, it would be difficult to assert that a substantial part of library operations go toward satisfaction of the requirements of funded research. Nevertheless, these data cannot be interpreted so simply.

The expenditure of a library's resources cannot be directly correlated with the overall numbers of those who use it, for whatever purpose. Library users differ widely in the services they require from the staff, facilities, and holdings, and it is probably true that the large majority of students who enter the libraries primarily in search of a warm, dry place to study make minimal demands on its resources. A small number of researchers, on the other hand, may receive inordinate shares of the time and money the library spends. The data available from this study do not permit us to assign costs directly to the various categories of respondents.

As a general overview of the population of library users, the survey serves to indicate several areas for further study. For example, it is clear that certain library facilities attract and serve the bulk of funded researchers (Table 1) and that the purposes and ways in which the libraries are used differ strongly for research-funded and non-funded users (Tables 2, 4). Studies directed toward these facilities and services will clarify the patterns of library use for research-related purposes.

A large number of the libraries' services are carried on intramurally, and may not be reflected in the activities of people who go in and out. Such services as reference searches, inter-library loans, and bibliographic assistance are likely to be far more heavily used by researchers than others,

and to require efforts which cannot be adequately assessed by a count of the numbers of people who request and obtain them. In addition, the materials purchased, catalogued, and stored in response to specific research needs may drain much of the total funds available for the libraries' use, yet not appear as chargeable to research activities. In these instances, data from records of library staff activity and purchases can contribute to an understanding of how the research functions affect library operations and needs.

Investigation of these issues, then, may well show radically different results from those reported here. Added to the findings of such studies, these data will assist the University in an accurate determination of the part which research-related requirements play in overall University libraries' operations and costs.

Location _____ Appendix A Date _____

Interviewer _____ Time _____

Library Users Survey - 1975

We are conducting a survey for the University to study the use of Library services. Will you tell me

1. Which facilities or services have you used on this visit to the Library? (Were you studying, checking out materials, consulting a source of information, using another facility, or ?)

_____

_____

2. *(If "studying" or "reading", ask:)* Did you use materials from this library, or those you brought with you?

____ Library ____ Brought own

3. *(If Library facilities or services used)* What is your purpose for using the (facility or service)? Is it for preparing classwork, researching a paper, obtaining information for research projects, or ?)

_____

_____

4. *(If research use)* Who (or what agency) is sponsoring or funding the research?

_____

_____

5. Were you helped by any member of the Library staff?

____ No ____ Yes - What did he/she do to help you?

_____

6. About how often do you use the Libraries for similar purposes as today's?

____ 5 or more times/week ____ 1 time/month

____ 3 - 4 times/week ____ 1 - 2 times/quarter

____ 1 - 2 times/week ____ 1 - 2 times/year

____ 2 - 3 times/month ____ Less than 1 time/year

7. Are you a

# of credit hrs.

____ Student at the University - ____ Undergraduate - Department _____ _____

____ Grad/Prof - Department _____ _____

____ UW Staff member - Department _____ Position _____

____ UW Faculty member - Department _____

____ Student - Non-UW - Institution _____ Department _____

____ Undergraduate ____ Graduate

____ Other *(specify)* _____

____ Other - *(specify status and institution where possible)*

_____

8. *(If Graduate Student)* Do you have a Traineeship Stipend or Grant?

____ No ____ Yes - What is its source?

_____